

ADDRESS

BY

R. HARCOURT, M.A.,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

TEACHERS' CONVENTION,

IN THE

High School Lecture Room, Cayuga,

August 30th, 1873.

PRINTED BY W. T. SAWLE, "SACHEM" OFFICE,
CALEDONIA, ONT.

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The EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA



Queen's University at Kingston

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TEACHERS' CONVENTION,

August 29 & 30, 1873.

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“Have we Progressed or Retrograded since 1871.”

In giving a short address upon the subject allotted to me on the programme, I do not intend to weary you with statistics of attendance or of classes, comparing the figures of to-day with those appertaining to the schools of 1871. There is somehow a striking mania for statistics the world wide over, and perhaps I cannot enter satisfactorily into my subject without reverting to them. Still I will spare you as much as I can, asking you to fill in the canvas by referring to the annual departmental reports. Ere I rush into the midst of my subject, lest I forget it altogether, I must express my satisfaction that we have such a number present; that there are before me unmistakeable evidences of a warm interest centering in school topics; that I have during the past two and a quarter years unfailingly experienced genuine kindness at the hands of school officials throughout the county; that so far as I know, I can count upon each of the 130 teachers I have met with in that time as a personal friend; that in a word every encouragement has been extended to me which I could reasonably expect. True, I have had good reason to complain of the apathetic indifference of Trustees on some odd occasions; true, I have visited schools whose teachers have seemed by far too unappreciative of their highest of privileges; but these occasions have been few and those teachers scarce 10 per cent. of the total number.

Some one has remarked that the Germans do the thinking for Europe. The compliment embodied in the remark was genuine, for in every department of science or literature we recognize the impress of their genius. To them certainly belongs the proud distinction of having first systematised public instruction under the administration of the civil power. In this respect all the other nations of Europe must be allotted secondary places. With them, too, education first became a science, and training schools for teachers had in their midst,

their first beginning. How sound were Luther's views; how wise his acts in educational matters! Thus early in the history of emancipated thought and speech did he see the grand significance of an educated people. How persevering, too, have the Germans been in improving and perfecting their systems of school and college training. So grateful were they to Pestalozzi, who was *facile princeps* the greatest of school reformers, that on the 12th of January, 1846, 1,000 schools and 50,000 teachers publicly celebrated the anniversary of his centennial birthday. In some portions of Germany in particular there is manifested unremittingly that warm interest in educational matters which cannot fail to prove of greatest value to the welfare of the people. Perchance the oft-quoted sentence, "the Prussian Common School won the battle of Sadowa," will, when thoroughly dissected, stand the fiercest light of criticism. The public school is but a development of the parochial school, an institution of the Christian Church. As early as the fourth century the planting of a Christian Church and the establishment of a school for children went hand-in-hand. The great obstacles to school work of those days are now non-existent. The art of printing, the use of the vernacular language with a score of other causes, have paved the way for improvements scarce even dreamed of then.

For holding the opinion that our schools have been progressing certainly and safely, I find abundant reasons in the following circumstances: There is in the first place a greater uniformity in the work done, as well as a more strict adherence than usual to a fuller programme. I think that after the experience I have had (and I do not forget how limited it is) I can speak with tolerable accuracy of what is being done in the schools of Haldimand. Two years ago, save in the village schools and in a few of the larger rural schools, the want that struck me most was the utter disregard of dictation exercises. The importance of this branch in its bearings on *writing*, *spelling* and *composition* can scarcely be overrated. That in this way with occasional variations, spelling can be taught more thoroughly than in any other, is, I think, a generally admitted fact. Those who are conversant with some of the other languages, can testify practically to the utility of this method as a means of acquiring both the spelling and pronunciation of foreign words. Had greater attention been paid to this subject, the written examination for candidates about to enter High schools would seem far lighter than it does. The plan of so providing, that the scholars in junior classes shall each day write on a slate, a part or all of the day's reading lesson is a very good one. Such a method, in addition to the positive good results has negative ones, such as keeping the children busily engaged, to recommend it. So much importance is attached to this plan in some of the schools of the American cities, that the junior scholars not only write their reading lessons, but dispense with the books altogether and read their lessons from the slates.

Two years ago 90 per cent. of the scholars in our FOURTH Readers, in this county, wrote with very great difficulty the simplest of sentences to dictation. Now, owing to some degree of attention

having been paid to it, scholars in most of the schools in the second reader write similar sentences with ease. That our programme, while based on a sound principle is ill-suited in many respects to the vast majority of our schools is plain to every practical teacher. The idea of uniformity is carried too far, for clearly a programme which is adapted to a graded school in a town or village, will be quite out of place when applied to some of the rural schools. Only in a very few schools, in my opinion, can some of the fifth form subjects, such as *Chemistry*, *Physiology*, *Civil Government* or *Agriculture*, be taught with even a chance of advantage. As it is best to read but a few books and read them carefully and often, so it is wise to teach a narrow range of subjects, giving to each of them ample and thorough scrutiny. That a desire for uniformity has led to mistakes in other directions, is evident from a glance at the regulation which makes it necessary for each High School Board to employ an Assistant Teacher. Now, certainly, there are High Schools, where, owing to the small attendance no assistant is needed; and to pay that assistant is a financial load calculated in some cases to suspend operations completely.

Perhaps no accomplishment is rarer than that of reading in a pleasing and intelligible style. To be compelled to listen to the drawling monotone of one pupil, and for a change to the harsh, rapid, and high-pitched accents of another, and then to the stammering style of a third, who will pause just when the sense forbids, who, knowing nothing of a rising or falling inflection, always sinks the voice into a whisper at the end of each sentence, is surely three-fold torture. May we not justly attribute much of this faultiness of style to imperfect teaching? I can safely say that in the matter of reading, there has been marvellous improvement in the schools of Haldimand. In most of them appreciative attention is carefully paid to pauses, attempts are being made to inflect the voice and cultivate an easy and natural style. As teachers, we should not forget the plain utility of some simple rules of elocution, that there are "pauses," and important ones too, which the printers' art does not reveal to us, that unless we attend to the one emphatic word of every sentence we fail to bring out its full meaning; that the simplest interrogatory sentence admits of half a dozen shades of meaning according to the changes of emphasis and intonation. Much of the difficulty is due to a want of attention to beginners. If well taught at first, progress will be sure and swift, whereas if the early teaching be careless and defective, the task of substituting a good method for a bad one, will be doubly difficult.

Connected with the question of progress in certain branches of study, in relation I might say of cause and effect, are the two items of examination of teachers and school accommodation. The provisions now in force for the examination of teachers, are such that if wisely carried out, the standard of the profession must be raised, and along with it the status of our schools. A council of instruction may pass regulations wise and equitable, school officials

may earnestly strive to carry them into effect, yet all will be "flat, stale and unprofitable" unless our teachers are both qualified for their work and conscientious in the discharge of their every duty. The fact that somehow or another teachers received First and Second Class Certificates three and four years ago, who could not now obtain a third, that while it was exceptional for an applicant to fail then, those who succeed now are but thirty per cent. of the whole, is known to all of us. To explain this fact by a mere glance at the *personnel* of the examining boards, is a thing impossible, since in not a few instances our County Councils have wisely retained as examiners, members of the old boards. The oft-uttered statement that the standard is too high, that the supply of teachers must of a consequence fail to meet the demand, when sifted contains but little reason and less truth.

The number of certificated teachers is probably larger than ever before; they certainly receive better salaries; the vast majority of them hold certificates of the third grade, and the standard of that grade is *even now* too low. The following statistics may here be fittingly introduced:—

Examination of Dec. 1871—Out of 21 candidates 12 were successful.									
"	"	July 1872—	"	47	"	29	"	"	"
"	"	Dec. 1872—	"	26	"	8	"	"	"
"	"	July 1873—	"	41	"	20	"	"	"

The fact that many applicants who fail at one examination, instead of being discouraged, try again and are successful, is a matter of great satisfaction to the examiners. We all, I am sure, rejoice to know that we are to have additional Normal Schools, and that their location will make them easy of access to districts hitherto unprovided for. I would wish that more of our teachers would attend these schools, since those who can, through books alone, without any outside help, "pick up" a good style of teaching, are very few in number. So long as nine-tenths of our teachers are persons who have attended only a public school, who have had no opportunity of comparing different methods of teaching, and who, so soon as they obtain a certificate, set up shop themselves, acquiring what little method they have by years of rough and expensive experience, our schools will progress but slowly. Surely teaching is a profession, and being such requires considerable time in the mastery of its principles.

No one, whose attention has been called to the matter, could imagine the miserable condition of the majority of the school-houses of 1871. At that time there were not ten properly furnished buildings in Haldimand. Many of them with low ceilings, broken floors, and damaged windows, had for seats nothing other than the antiquated bench facing the wall. Too cold and too hot by turns in winter, and suffocating in summer, with nothing to attract and everything to discourage scholars, we wonder that an intelligent public has so long tolerated their existence. Even now in some sections, though attention has been generally directed to the grievance, the Trustees seem to study every possible means for postponing the erection of a

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suitable building. In the main, however, I am especially gratified at the improvements effected. In two years sixteen brick buildings have been erected; all of them substantial and well furnished, some of them models of neatness and finish. In a dozen sections, preparations are being made for replacing the old houses, so that we have good reason to hope that in a year or two at farthest, our county will no longer be noticeable for the miserable style of its school-houses. Three of the newly erected buildings, I might add, accommodate two teachers, and will seat each of them 110 scholars; also, that of the 80 school-houses in Haldimand 33 are brick, 39 are frame, 3 are stone, and 5 are log.

To summarize the foregoing statements, we HAVE progressed since 1871, swiftly in one particular, slowly and steadily in several others. Let us hope that each year will find us making additional efforts; that our Municipal Councils will deal liberally with us; that the public will lend its earnest patronage; that our teachers with better salaries than now, will cling lovingly to their noble profession, and do their utmost to instil into the minds of our youth principles of truth and piety, patriotism and philanthropy. But as the shield has its reversed side, as the blackest cloud may have a silver lining, so our subject ere it be dismissed, must be presented in a new and gloomy aspect. Let us not forget that there are hundreds of children in each of our counties who are growing up in ignorance; who never darken the doors of school-houses; who spend their time most of them in idleness, a few of them in cruel drudgery; whose future it is sad to contemplate. Until we force the parents or guardians of such to educate them; until noticing that a large per cent. of our youth, attending school less than twenty days each year, reap no good therefrom, we stir ourselves to find a remedy; our system, admirable though it is in some respects, is lamentably deficient.

Who does not remember many of the inimitable passages of the people's novelist, Charles Dickens? Who does not recollect that some of the finest of these passages have a direct bearing on school subjects? How dearly Dickens loved the young; how truthfully and fondly does he depict their joys and sorrows, their struggles and their hopes? Turn to the scene describing Nickleby's introduction to the system of teaching adopted by his employer, the ignorant and cruel Squeers. Squeers, utterly unacquainted with even the elements of the simplest subject, kept a boarding-school in a remote part of England, and owing to flaming advertisements announcing thorough teaching and low fees, parents, careful in other items perhaps, but very careless in the all-important one of education, sent to him their children. The scene referred to reads as follows:—"This is the first class in English spelling and Philosophy, Nickleby; now, then, where's the first boy? Please sir, he's cleaning the back parlor window, said the temporary head of the Philosophical class. So he is, to be sure, rejoined Squeers. We go upon the practical mode of teaching Nickleby; c l e a n, a verb active, to make bright, to scour; w i n d e r, a casement; when a boy knows this out

of a book, he goes and does it. It's just the same principle as the use of the globes. Where's the second boy? Please sir, he's weeding the garden, replied a small voice. To be sure, said Squeers, so he is; b o t - t i n - n e y, noun substantive, a knowledge of plants; when he has learned that botany means a knowledge of plants, he goes and knows them; that's our system, Nickleby, what do you think of it? It is a very useful one at any rate, answered Nicholas. I believe you rejoined Squeers; third boy, what's a horse? A beast sir, replied the boy. So it is, said Squeers, ain't it Nickleby? I believe there is no doubt of that, answered Nicholas. Of course there isn't, said Squeers. A horse is a quadruped, and quadruped is Latin for beast, as everybody that's gone through the grammar knows, or else where's the use of having grammars at all; where, indeed, said Nicholas, abstractedly. As you are perfect in that, resumed Squeers, turring to the boy, go and look after my horse and rub him down well, or I'll rub you down. The rest of the class go and draw water up till somebody tells you to leave off, for it's washing day to-morrow, and they want the boilers filled. So saying he dismissed the first class to their experiments in Practical Philosophy."

The genus Squeers, if it ever had an existence in Canada, is long since extinct. The satirist, looking for a vulnerable point in our system, would doubtless call attention to the fact, that with the best of intentions, we allow tens of thousands of children to grow up in rudest ignorance. May the day soon dawn when these waifs will be cared for, when compulsory laws will be strictly enforced, when our system in all respects will be on a footing with the age. In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for the patient hearing you have extended to me, a hearing worthy of something be'ter than I had to offer you.



ATTENDANCE.

Based on Half-Yearly Reports, January to July 1873.

	Number of pupils on the register.	Number attending less than 60 days for the half year.	Average for the half year.	Number of days the schools were open; average.
Canboro'.....	315	198	125	98
N. Cayuga.....	574	284	271	108
S. Cayuga.....	301	148	134	110
Dunn.....	282	206	91	96
Moulton.....	506	231	186	93
Oneida.....	741	322	338	110
Rainham.....	609	273	293	116
Walpole.....	1004	891	720	114
Seneca.....	875	396	452	116
Totals.....	5807	3012	2863	107 (average.)

N. B.—The number of teaching days for the first half of 1873 is 120, so that more than 3,000 pupils were absent half the time.

School Houses of Haldimand.

	Number of frame.	Of Log.	Of Brick.	Of Stone.	Number afford- ing sufficient accommoda- tion.	Number well furnished.	Total.
Canboro' Township.....	3		1		1		4
N. Cayuga.....	5	1	1	1	3	1	8
S. Cayuga.....	3			1	1		4
Dunn.....	3		2		3	2	5
Moulton.....	3		5		4	2	8
Oneida.....	3	3	5		4	3	11
Rainham.....	2		5		7	5	7
Walpole.....	9	1	7	1	10	8	18
Seneca.....	7		5		7	6	12
Caledonia.....			1		1	1	1
Dunnville.....			1		1	1	1
Cayuga.....			1				1
Total.....	33	5	33	3	42	29	80

Number of Teachers and their Certificates.

	Male.	Female.	Old Board Certificates.	New Board Certificates; Class 3rd.	Special Certificates.	Normal, 1st class.	Normal, 2nd class.	Total.
Canboro'.....	3	2	.....	4	1	.....	.....	5
North Cayuga.....	3	5	1	5	.....	.....	2	8
South Cayuga.....	.....	4	.....	3	1	.....	.....	4
Dunn.....	.....	5	.....	3	1	.....	1	5
Moulton.....	3	5	.....	5	1	.....	1	8
Oneida.....	6	6	.....	7	3	1	1	12
Rainham.....	3	4	1	5	.....	.....	.....	7
Seneca.....	6	7	2	8	.....	.....	3	13
Walpole.....	10	10	3	9	3	.....	5	20
Caledonia.....	.....	4	1	1	.....	1	1	4
Cayuga.....	1	1	2	.....	.....	.....	.....	2
Dunnville.....	1	2	1	1	.....	.....	1	3
	36	55	13	51	10	2	15	91

SALARIES.

Based on reports received July, 1873.

	Highest salary paid Male Teacher.	Highest salary paid Female Teacher.	Lowest salary paid any Teacher.	Average salary of all the Teachers.
Canboro'.....	\$400	\$240	\$216	\$239
North Cayuga.....	425	240	163	319
South Cayuga.....	none employed.	276	216	212
Dunn.....	none employed.	275	210	260
Moulton.....	425	300	225	238
Oneida.....	425	280	204	314
Rainham.....	400	300	192	292
Seneca.....	425	300	200	312
Walpole.....	430	300	120	303
Caledonia.....	none employed.	400	200	250
Cayuga.....	400	240	210	320
Dunnville.....	430	240	216	302

